

MAJOR BATTLES AND TURNING POINTS OF WORLD WAR II

The Progress of World War II in Europe and in
Asia, 1939 – 1945

A. The Anschluss, or Invasion of Austria

- Before World War II began in Europe, Hitler and the Nazi war machine had already begun taking over land and restoring themselves to their former greatness – all against the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. Remember the last scenes of “The Sound of Music?” This was what caused the family to flee!



B. The Battle of Stalingrad

During this battle over an oil rich, industrial city, the German army was able to capture the region; however, they were immediately surrounded by the Soviet Union's Red Army and forced to surrender. The German losses exceeded 300,000 soldiers.



Soviet Soldiers finally stopped the progress of the Nazis during the Battle of Stalingrad; they began marching towards Berlin from here.

C. The Attack on Pearl Harbor

On December 7th, 1941, the Japanese launched this surprise attack on the United States at its naval base in Hawaii. While Americans knew that relations with the Japanese were strained, no one expected such a hasty and violent ambush of the naval base from the Japanese.



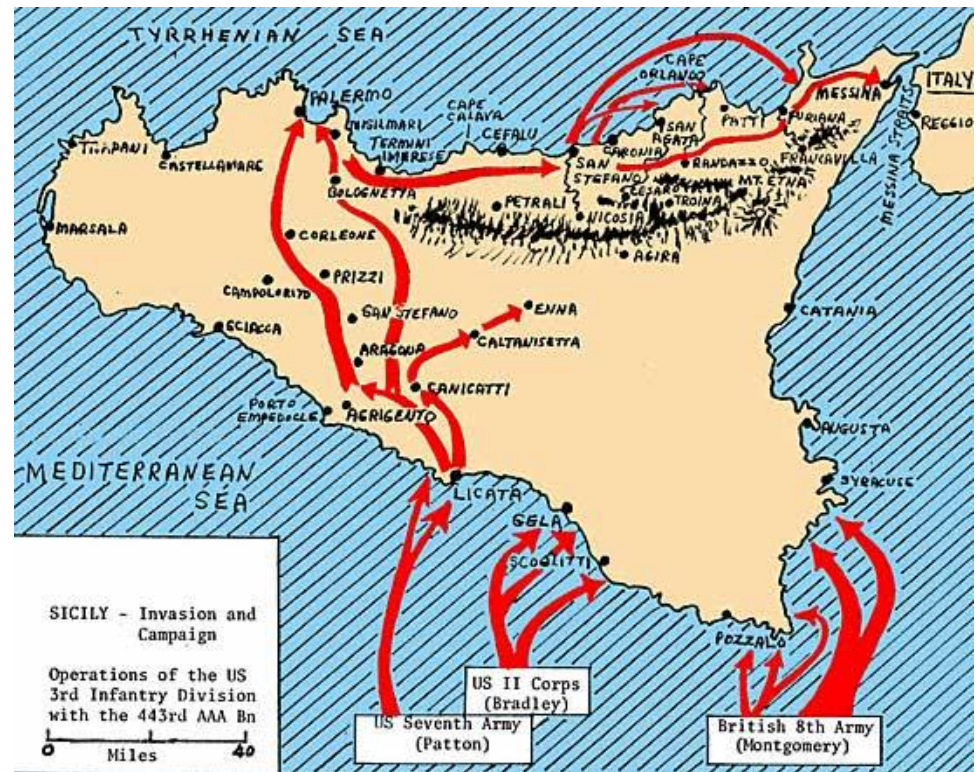
D. The Battle of the Bulge



Following the D-Day invasion, the German Army launched an all out offensive against the Allied Powers along a 50 mile front in Belgium. Over 75,000 Allied Troops were listed as casualties; but the Germans were eventually defeated.

E. Sicily

The Allied Powers launched an invasion of this Italian island from North Africa in 1943, taking over the island thanks to the initiative of General George Patton. From Sicily, the Allies would launch another attack on mainland Italy.



F. The Battle of El Alamein – North Africa

This battle in North Africa was won when the combined forces of the United States and England cornered soldiers led by the German General, Erwin Rommel, in Egypt. It was the first major action of American soldiers led by future leaders Dwight David Eisenhower and George Patton.



G. The Battle of Leningrad

Nazi Germans carried out a siege against this city for over 900 days (almost three years!). The Soviets ate dogs, cats, horses, and “bread” made from wallpaper paste in a desperate effort to survive. Millions died; however, the city never surrendered, and eventually reinforcements arrived to defeat the Germans.



H. Operation Overlord: D-Day

On June 6th, 1944, American, British, Canadian, and French troops landed on the beaches of Normandy in France. Over 3,000 died at Omaha Beach as mostly American soldiers stormed a heavily fortified, German-controlled beachhead.

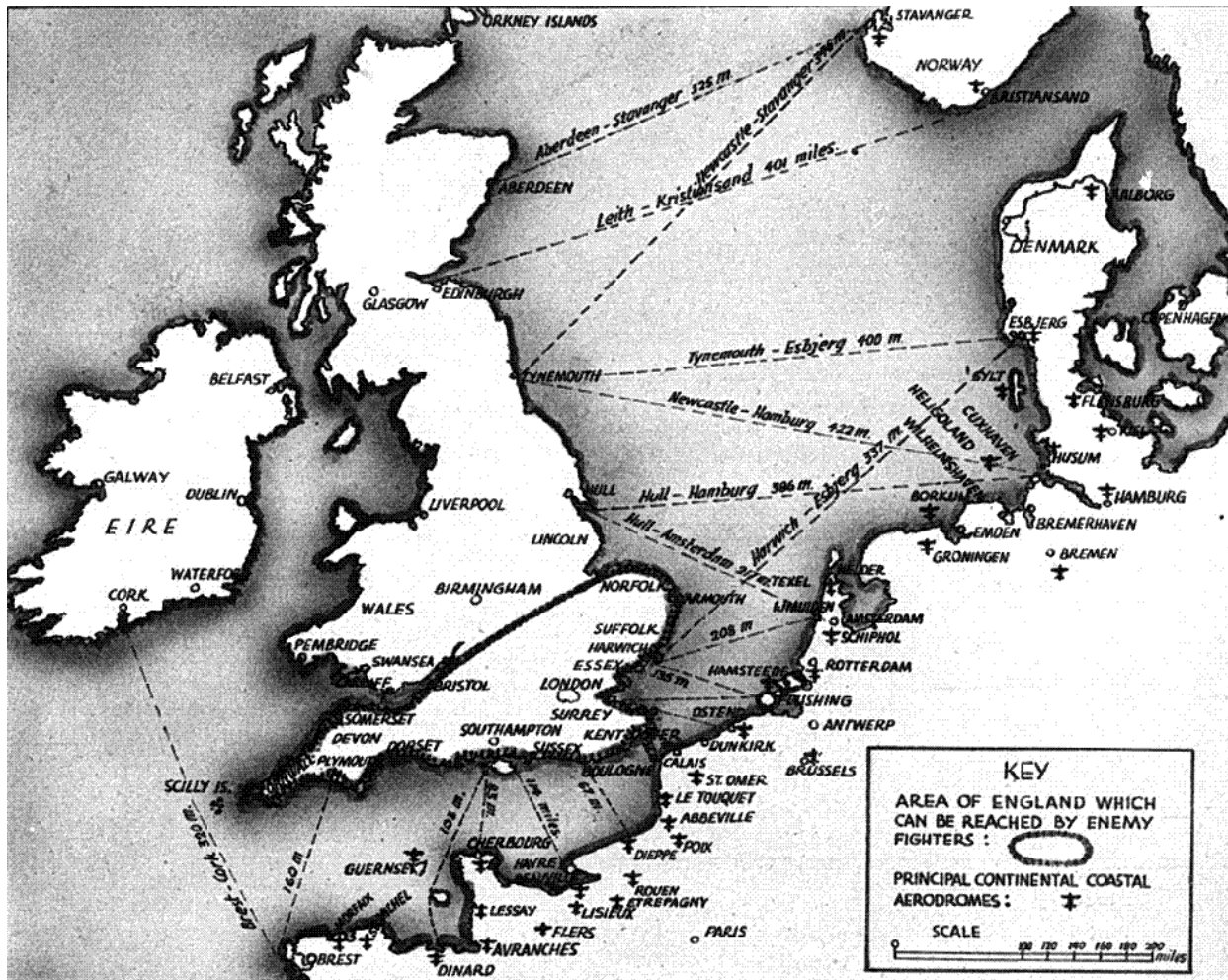


I. The Evacuation of Dunkirk



The British people helped to evacuate over 300,000 Allied soldiers here, ferrying men with yachts, fishing vessels, and even rowboats. These men lived to fight another day, and would later help to win World War II.

K. The Battle of Britain



During this air battle, the Royal Air Force, (RAF), defeated the German Luftwaffe (Air Force) despite begin outnumbered 10 to 1 at times. Churchill declared, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets; we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender!"

J. The Liberation of Rome

X-RAY PHOTO *of Mussolini's BRAIN*



- Italy's capital city was liberated in June of 1944.
- Benito Mussolini was executed by his own people when he fled the capital.
- Nazi soldiers soon moved into Italy in order to shore up defenses, so the fighting continued on the Italian Front until the war in Europe came to an end.

L. The Bataan Death March



After the Japanese won the Philippine Islands, over 75,000 American soldiers were taken as prisoners of war. These men and women were forced to march over 60 miles, anyone who stepped out of line or collapsed would be immediately executed. Over 22,000 Americans were murdered on the march.

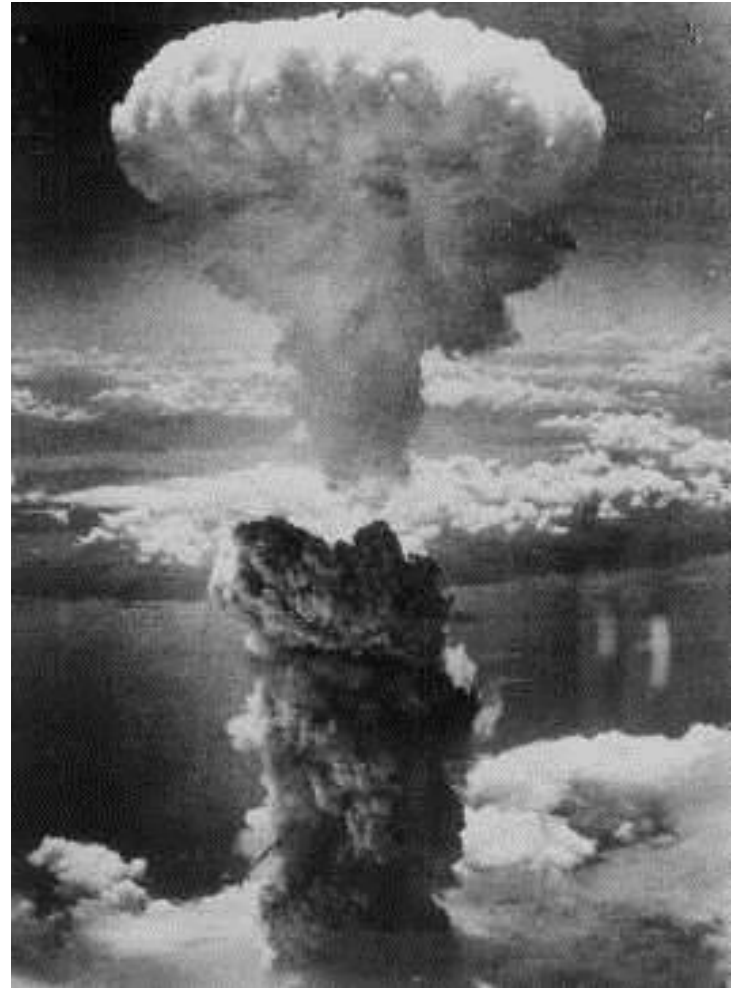
M. The Battle of Leyte Gulf

At the time, this was the largest naval battle in the history of warfare. Over 280 ships took part in the fighting near the Philippine Islands. The United States Navy defeated the Japanese during the battle, crippling its navy for the remainder of the war.



N. Hiroshima: August 6th, 1945

The first atomic weapon in the history of warfare was dropped over this city on August 6th, 1945, killing close to 100,000 civilians. The Japanese surrendered to the United States of America later that month, after another atomic bomb had been dropped over Nagasaki, Japan. Historians still debate whether these weapons were necessary in order to compel the Japanese to stop fighting.



O. The Philippine Islands, 1941 – 1945

During the War in the Pacific, Douglas MacArthur was forced to abandon these islands. He vowed, however, “I shall return.” By 1945, he had returned, liberating the islands from Japanese rule and using them as a launch site for further invasions of Japan.

